

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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EXDIS

E.OAQQYTWG GDS

TAGS: PINR, ET, SO

SUBJ: US INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE ON SOMALIA

AF/E FOR MCELHINEY

REF: STATE 030805

1. IN LIGHT PARA 1 OF REFTEL I REALIZE THAT WE SHOULD HAVE SET FORTH IN ADDIS 1371 OUR REASONS FOR DESIRING BE FULLY CANDID WITH FONMIN DR. MINASSIE IN RESPONSE TO HIS REQUEST FOR USG ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET PRESENCE AND EQUIPMENT IN SOMALIA. I ALSO BELIEVE IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE TO DELIVER TO DR. MINASSIE TEXT CONTAINED IN REFTEL WITHOUT FIRST BRINGING TO DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION CONSIDERATIONS SET FORTH BELOW.

2. IF WE PROVIDE DR. MINASSIE WITH TEXT CONTAINED IN REFTEL (AND I CONSIDER THAT SUCH AN ANSWER WOULD BE BETTER THAN NO ANSWER AT ALL), HIS REACTION WILL PROBABLY BE THAT USG IS WITHHOLDING ITS ESTIMATES REGARDING SOVIET EQUIPMENT IN SOMALIA BECAUSE IT DOES NOT WISH TO ADMIT, FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, HOW FAR SUPERIOR SOMALI WEAPONRY IS TO ETHIOPIAN. HE WILL SUSPECT THAT USG IS PRACTICING DECEPTION WITH IEG REGARDING THE PROBLEM WHICH IEB CONSIDERS ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL AT PRESENT TIME.

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3. I THINK IT QULUD BE MOST UNDESIRABLE TO GIVE SUCH AN IMPRESSION. USG HAS RECENTLY NOT BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE ETHIOPIA WITH NEARLY AS MUCH MILITARY EQUIPMENT AS IEG THINKS IT NEEDS AND IT WILL OBVIOUSLY NOT BE ABLE DO SO IN NEAR

FUTURE. HOWEVER, EVER SINCE ETHIOPIAN LEADERS FIRST BECAME GREATLY ALARMED BY INCREASED DELIVERIES OF SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT, WE HAVE BEEN VERY CANDID WITH THEM REGARDING OUR VIEWS OF THE SOMALI THREAT AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. I BELIEVE THEY APPRECIATE THIS CANDOR VERY MUCH, THAT THEY BELIEVE IT IS WHAT THEY ARE ENTITLED TO EXPECT IN VIEW OF THE "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WHICH HAS EXISTED FOR THE LAST 30 YEARS, AND THAT THEY CONTRAST IT FAVORABLY WITH STATEMENTS THEY HEAR FROM THE RUSSIANS AND CHINESE. TO DENY DR. MUXASSIE KEY ASPECTS OF THE INFORMATION HE HAS REQUESTED WILL RAISE SERIOUS DOUBTS ON THIS SCORE. IT WILL RAISE SERIOUS DOUBTS REGARDING OUR CREDIBILITY AND WHETHER WE STILL REGARD ETHIOPIA AS AN ALL-BUT-ALLY. THE CLOSENESS OF DR. MINASSIE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EMPEROR IS SUCH THAT HIS DOUBTS REGARDING OUR CREDIBILITY ARE LIKELY TO BE TRANSMITTED TO THE EMPEROR. THIS WILL HAPPEN AT A TIME WHEN WE KNOW THE EMPEROR AND TOP IEG OFFICIALS ARE PONDERING THE REAL VALUE TO ETHIOPIA OF US SUPPORT AND ARE CONSIDERING OTHER ALTERNATIVES.

4. I FEEL MORE STRONGLY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE BECAUSE I FORESEE ANOTHER "CREDIBILITY PROBLEM" WHICH IS LIKELY TO ARISE SOON. BOTH IN ADDIS ABABA AND IN WASHINGTON WE HAVE BEEN STRENUOUSLY ARGUING THAT CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PROVIDE INCREASED MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA. WHEN DR. MINASSIE TALKS WITH CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS IN MARCH, HOWEVER, MANY OF THEM MAY CONTEND THAT CONGRESSIONAL LIMITATIONS ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE ARE ONLY WORLDWIDE IN NATURE AND THAT THEY WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE THE ADMINISTRATION PROVIDE MORE FOR ETHIOPIA AT EXPENSE OF OTHER COUNTRIES.

5. I ENTIRELY UNDERSTAND THE DESIRE IN WASHINGTON TO AVOID A "NUMBERS GAME" IN WHICH US AND ETHIOPIAN OFFICIALS ARGUE OVER NUMBERS AND TYPES OF SOVIET EQUIPMENT IN SOMALIA. HOWEVER, I SHOULD THINK THAT HIGH-LEVEL J OFFICIALS WOULD HAVE NO SERIOUS EMBARRASSMENT IN STANDING BEHIND HONEST ESTIMATES
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MADE BY THE US INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY AND IN PROPOSING, IF NECESSARY, THAT ANY DISPUTES REGARDING THE ACCURACY OF THOSE ESTIMATES BE DISCUSSED BETWEEN ETHIOPIAN AND US INTELLIGENCE SPECIALISTS IN ADDIS. ALTERNATIVELY, THEY COULD SIMPLY TAKE POSITION, AS NEWSOM DID IN NOVEMBER, THAT USG DOES NOT WISH TO ARGUE NUMBERS WITH IEG.

6. IN SHORT, I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT ANY INCONVENIENCE WHICH MAY RESULT FROM ETHIOPIAN CRITICISM OF US INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES DURING THE FORTHCOMING WASHINGTON VISITS CAN COMPARE IN IMPORTANCE TO OUR MAINTAINING THE CONFIDENCE OF THE IEG THAT WE ARE CONTINUING TO DEAL WITH THEM IN A CANDID AND STRAIGHTFORWARD MANNER APPROPRIATE TO

THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WHICH HAS EXISTED BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES.

7. I WILL DELAY TRANSMITTING INFORMATION IN REFTEL TO DR. MINASSIE UNTIL RECEIPT OF INSTRUCTIONS WHICH HAVE TAKEN FOREGOING POINTS INTO CONSIDERATION.

8. IF THE DEPARTMENT STILL DOES NOT WISH TO PROVIDE DR. MINASSIE WITH SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON NUMBERS AND TYPES OF SOVIET EQUIPMENT IN SOMALIA, I WOULD APPRECIATE ITS CONSIDERING POSSIBILITY OF REVISIONS IN SECTIONS OF REFTEL ON "EQUIPMENT" AND "INTENTIONS" WHICH TAKE INTO ACCOUNT PARAGRAPH 3 OF MOGADISCIO 0228. WYMAN

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